



PRESS RELEASE

ETCOG Presents Five Awards for Regional Contributions at 90th Semi-Annual Board Meeting

Jefferson, TX, March 19, 2015: ETCOG honored regional citizens who exemplify excellence in performance, innovation, and contributions to the community at its 90th Semi-Annual Board of Director's Meeting today at the Transportation and Visitor Center in Jefferson, TX. Award criteria and recipient information is as follows:

REGIONAL CITIZEN OF THE YEAR - MARY SPEARMON OF MARION COUNTY

This award is designed to honor a citizen of East Texas who has contributed to the well-being of the East Texas Region. This year's recipient is Mary Spearmon of Marion County. Spearmon wears many hats in the community, serving as president of the Women of Jefferson County Organization, vice president of the Marion County Diversified Civic and Social Organization, and vice president of the Marion Cass Inter-Agency Council. *"Mrs. Spearmon works tirelessly through her many organizations conducting fundraisers for scholarship for Marion County students, scholarships for working women, donations to the food bank, participating in the food pantry, assisting with the band booster club, and helping raise money for the American Girl Book club, said ETCOG Area Agency on Aging Director, Bettye Mitchell. "She sings with a group called the Gospel Girls at local churches, nursing homes and assisted living. Mrs. Spearmon was nominated by Mr. John Cooper, a committee member of the Area Agency on Aging of East Texas, and a certified Ombudsman with that same program. It is our honor to recognize the compassion leadership of Mrs. Spearmon as the Regional Citizen of the Year."* In September, Spearmon was also selected as the Marion County Citizen of the Year. She has been married to her husband Sammie for 46 years, she is the mother of six children, has 16 grandchildren, and is the great-grandmother of four.

REGIONAL CORPORATE CITIZEN OF THE YEAR - TYLER JUNIOR COLLEGE

The Regional Corporate Citizen of the Year award honors a corporate partner in East Texas that has contributed to the well-being of the East Texas Region. Tyler Junior College (TJC) was established in 1926 and over time has built deep East Texas roots. TJC serves a population that spans 83 square miles, 2 counties, 6 school districts, approximately 150,000 people and offers enrichment opportunities and specialized training for governmental entities, business and industry. TJC fosters a culture of leadership and helps individuals explore, expand, prepare for and advance their career. They have shown collaboration with neighboring agencies, the community and focus on providing a rich academic experience. They have received two Skills Development Awards, through the Texas Workforce Commission, totaling \$450,390. The first award, in 2011, was for \$180,390 when TJC partnered with Delek Refining to train nearly 300 terminal operators, drivers, master craftsmen and technicians. The second award, received in 2014, was for \$270,000. At that time, TJC partnered with Luminant to train 133 materials maintenance specialists, equipment maintenance apprentices and mining plant helpers. TJC offers outstanding facilities, the state's first power plant technology program and encourage economic growth through their partnerships. ETCOG leadership unanimously agrees that TJC has vastly contributed to the well-being of the East Texas Region for decades and is well deserving of the Regional Corporate Citizen of the Year award.

REGIONAL STATESMANSHIP AWARD - JUDGE THOMAS CRAVEY, CAMP COUNTY

The Regional Statesmanship Award recognizes a local, state, or federal official that has demonstrated valuable dedicated service to regional cooperation. Judge Thomas Cravey has invested over 30 years of service to the citizens of the county he leads and the East Texas Region in various posts in law enforcement and elective office. He entered public service in 1985 as a Reserve Deputy Sheriff, progressing to Deputy Sheriff, and then to County Constable. He is also member and past Chairman of the Juvenile Board for Camp, Titus, Morris and Marion Counties. He has served as Camp County Judge since 2008 and joined the ETCOG Board of Directors and

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Executive Committee in February, 2009. During his tenure on the ETCOG Board, he steadily moved through the various officer positions which culminated in his being elected as Chairman of the ETOCG Board of Directors from October, 2012 through September 30, 2013. Cravey is so well-liked and respected by his fellow Board members that he has received two Chairman's Service Awards for his exceptional service to the region. When asked if he would consider serving as ETCOG's representative to the Texas Association of Regional Councils (TARC) Board in 2011, he readily agreed to give of his time, energy and talents once again. During his time of service to TARC, the record will show he has never missed one meeting. This fall, Cravey was elected as Vice President of the TARC Board, a board which includes elected officials from all over the State of Texas. ETCOG Executive Director, David Cleveland, spoke of Judge Cravey's accomplishments at the board meeting and stated, ***"Everyone who has had the pleasure of working with him knows that he is a humble, dedicated public servant who always places the needs of others before his own, sometimes at great personal and professional cost. He is also a man of few words, but when he speaks, people listen because he leads with a servant's heart. He always looks for a way to say "yes" if it means helping his Neighbor, the Neighborhood, the Community, the County or the state."***

REGIONAL COMMITTEE SERVICE AWARD - GENE KEENON, REPUBLIC SERVICES, INC.

The Regional Committee Service Award recognizes an individual who has demonstrated a sustained, dedicated commitment to ETCOG efforts and activities. Gene Keenon has clearly demonstrated this commitment through his serving on the Workforce Solutions East Texas board, the ETCOG Economic Development Committee and the ETCOG Solid Waste Advisory Committee. He has been a valuable partner to ETCOG for many years and also enhanced his service by becoming the Co-Chairman of the Solid Waste Advisory Committee. In addition to his service at ETCOG, Gene serves the region with numerous other groups in East Texas, leading for people to commonly joke that he must have a clone in the region to attend so many meetings. ***ETCOG's Director of Workforce & Economic Development, Dough Shryock, said of Keenon, "Gene Keenon is the embodiment of the ETCOG Customer Service Creed; highlighting the concept of exceeding expectations. Gene has dedicated himself, through long and productive work, on behalf of East Texas. We are fortunate to count him as one of our own and grateful to Melynda, Dakota, Hayley, and Cassidy for their generosity in sharing him with us."***

EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR – EMILEIGH PHILLIPS, HUMAN RESOURCES / WORKFORCE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The ETCOG Employee of the Year is nominated and voted on by ETCOG Staff and the top three candidates are presented to the ETCOG Selection Committee for consideration. This year's recipient, Emileigh Phillips, began work at ETCOG in January of 2013 as a receptionist. Over time, due to Phillips' hard work and dedication, her duties have expanded as Office Coordinator and by serving part time within the Workforce and Economic Development department on special projects. ***"Emileigh exemplifies every aspect of our customer service creed. She works hard, works smart, shows people that she cares and has a kind and generous spirit. She always looks for a way to say yes to the customer, ETCOG leadership, and her co-workers. She was nominated by several co-workers for the Employee of the Year award, each describing her positivity and work ethic. I am proud to have her on the ETCOG team and as our Employee of the Year," said ETCOG Executive Director, David Cleveland.***

Photos from the event are available by contacting ETCOG's Communications Manager, Lindsay Vanderbilt at (903) 931-1830.

About ETCOG

The East Texas Council of Governments (ETCOG) is a voluntary association of counties, cities, school districts and special districts within the fourteen-county East Texas region. ETCOG assists local governments in planning for common needs, cooperating for mutual benefit and coordinating for sound regional development. Established in 1970, ETCOG, either directly, or through its contractors, provides programs and services for East Texas seniors, employers, and job seekers. ETCOG and its contractors also build the 9-1-1 emergency call delivery system, provide peace officer training and homeland security planning services; and deliver rural transportation services, business finance programs, and environmental grant funding for the region.